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SC REGISTRY REJECTS GOVT'S REQUEST TO CLARIFY 2G VERDICT

The Centre sought to know whether or not the 2012 judgment bars the allocation of spectrum through means other than public auction

NON-AUCTION ROUTE FOR SPECTRUM ALLOCATION

In the 2012 verdict, the Supreme Court observed that public auction should be the preferred method for allocation of public resources like spectrum. The Centre, in its application, sought an exemption from the auction route for the allocation of spectrum for certain non-commercial purposes that allow the government to carry out its sovereign and public interest functions

REGISTRAR SAYS APPLICATION MISCONCEIVED

- The registry said the Centre's application was in effect seeking a review of the 2012 verdict in the guise of seeking clarification
- The registrar termed the application as "misconceived" and said it "does not disclose any reasonable cause for being entertained". The Centre can now appeal to the court against the registrar's order

Order XV, rule 5

OF SUPREME COURT RULES, 2013 ALLOWS THE REGISTRAR TO REJECT APPLICATIONS

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SEX SCANDAL

CM to PM: Take diplomatic action to bring Prajwal back

Soon after the scandal came to light, students, activists and civil society groups protested across the state seeking the arrest of JDS MP Prajwal Revanna

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to initiate action through the Ministry of External Affairs to bring JDS MP Prajwal Revanna, accused in the Hassan sex scandal, back to the country.

In a letter to the PM, the CM sought immediate steps to cancel the diplomatic passport of Prajwal and initiate action through diplomatic and police channels to ensure the swift return of the MP to "face the full force of law." The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Karnataka will provide all details and fulfil legal formalities in this regard, the CM stated.

Siddaramaiah said the alleged sexual exploitation of women by the sitting Hassan MP and NDA candidate for Hassan LS seat is a serious case. The allegations against Prajwal are horrific and shameful and have shaken the conscience of the country, he added.

Siddaramaiah said SIT under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is probing all allegations against Prajwal. "Constitution of SIT was done as soon as the true nature of the alleged crimes against several women emerged and the victims came forward to file a complaint against Prajwal Revanna, and an FIR was lodged on Sunday," he stated.

The CM said Prajwal fled the country fearing police action. "It is learnt from reports that he is traveling abroad on his diplomatic passport," the CM added.

MORE: P4

MP Prajwal seeks a week to appear before SIT

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru/Hassan

HASSAN MP Prajwal Revanna on Wednesday requested the SIT to give him seven days to appear before it.

The SIT issued a notice on Tuesday asking him to appear before it within 24 hours. In his first reaction after the scandal came to light, the JDS MP posted on his social media accounts, "Truth will prevail soon." Prajwal, who is abroad, posted, "As I am not in Bangalore to attend the enquiry, I have communicated to CID through my advocate. Truth will prevail soon."

Advocate Arun G, representing the MP, visited the CID office and submitted a request to the investigation officer (IO) of SIT seeking seven days for his client to appear before him for questioning.

Even as the SIT is probing the case registered by Holenarasipura police against Prajwal Revanna and his father HD Revanna, MLA, they are likely to move the jurisdictional court on Thursday. It is learnt that they will file their anticipatory bail petition before the court. They may also move the High Court of Karnataka to quash the FIR against them. Revanna, who has been summoned by the SIT, may not appear before it as directed.

Shah: State govt's delay helped Prajwal flee

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday targeted the Congress government in Karnataka for not taking immediate action in the Hassan sex scandal and said, as a result, the accused in heinous crimes fled the country. Addressing a rally in Hubballi, he alleged that the Congress government did not act against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna for the fear of losing Vokkaliga votes. He said the state government waited for voting in the Vokkaliga belt to get over to act against the MP. He, however, reiterated that the BJP would never stand with anybody who sexually exploits or harasses any woman.

No Saptapati? No Hindu marriage: SC

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

IN a significant verdict on the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA), the Supreme Court has ruled that the registration of a union will be null and void if a valid ceremony and rituals like the *Saptapati*, are not performed.

A bench of justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih described the Hindu marriage as a *samskara* and a sacrament which has to be accorded its status as an institution of great value in the society.

"A marriage is not an event for 'song and dance' and 'wining and dining' or an occasion to demand and exchange dowry and gifts by undue pressure leading to possible initiation of criminal proceedings thereafter. A marriage is not a commercial transaction. It is a solemn foundational event celebrated so as to establish a relationship between a man and a woman who acquire the status of a husband and wife for an evolving family in future which is a basic unit of Indian society," the bench said.

The court made these observations after hearing a petition filed by a woman seeking transfer of her divorce case from Muzaffarpur in Bihar to Ranchi in Jharkhand. The couple had registered their marriage in UP without the valid ceremonial wedding under the HMA.

The bench, after perusing the marriage certificate in the case — both are trained commercial pilots — said that since it was issued in the absence of ceremonial requirements under Section 7 of HMA, it was invalid. It also quashed the divorce petition filed by the man and the maintenance case instituted by the woman.

The bench disapproved the increasing practice of couples getting their 'marriages' registered for "practical purposes" like applying for a visa and solemnising the union later.

Young men and women must "think deeply about the institution of marriage even before they enter upon it and as to how sacred the said institution is, in Indian society," the bench said. Describing marriage as sacred as it provides a lifelong, dignity-affirming, equal, consensual and healthy union of two individuals, the bench said a Hindu marriage facilitates procreation, consolidates the unit of family and solidifies the spirit of fraternity within various communities.

Record Rs 2.10 lakh crore GST collection in April

Maharashtra led the mop-up chart followed by Karnataka, Gujarat

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

THE monthly gross GST collection crossed the ₹2 lakh crore milestone for the first time in April, giving the government bragging rights over the health of the economy.

The record jump came from a 12.4% rise as compared to April last year's figures of ₹1.87 lakh crore. The surge was mainly driven by a strong 13.4% growth in domestic transactions and an 8.3% increase in imports, the finance ministry said.

"After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue for April 2024 stands at ₹1.92 lakh crore, reflecting an impressive 15.5% growth compared to the same period last year," the ministry's statement said.

When the GST system was rolled out in 2017-18, the monthly mop-up used to be in the range of ₹80,000-90,000 crore. It crossed ₹1 lakh crore mark for the first time in October 2018.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman attributed the record to "the strong momentum in the economy and efficient tax collections".

Pratik Jain, Partner, PwC India said: "As expected, the collections for April '24 have crossed a major milestone of 2 lakh crore. It is particularly encouraging to see that that growth is largely led by domestic consumption. With the next wave of GST reforms expected after the formation of the new Government, the growth may be further accelerated."

He added that it may also enable the government to take bolder decisions such as rate rationalisation or bringing products such as ATF and natural gas under the GST ambit.

Abhishek Jain, Partner & National Head, Indirect Tax, KPMG, attributed this surge to the deadline for GST audits and corresponding notices issued during this year.

Maharashtra led the GST mop-up chart followed by Karnataka and Gujarat.

K'TAKA NETS HIGHEST COLLECTION OF Rs 15,978 CR

Bengaluru: The election season seems to have not dampened GST collections. Karnataka [illegible] highest GST collection of Rs 15,978 crore in April and bagged the second position. Sources in the tax department, who waged a running battle against tax evaders, said, "Because of the Model Code of Conduct, follow up and compliance has been good. Six people have been arrested for tax fraud and cases have been registered. The fight against tax evasion is on." Karnataka's growth remained at an impressive 9% compared to the collection of Rs 14,593 crore during the same month last year.

Docs remove cell phone from stomach of accused

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

DOCTORS found a mobile phone during a surgery performed on an undertrial lodged in Shivamogga Central Jail on April 25.

On March 28 Parashuram, 26, the undertrial, complained of stomach pain and he was taken to the hospital on the jail premises. When Parashuram complained that he could tolerate the pain, he was taken to the McGANN Teaching District Hospital the same night.

Parashuram told the doctors there that he had swallowed a stone sometime ago. Accordingly, the doctors reported "stomach pain due to consumption of a foreign body (stone)" and treated him.

As his condition deteriorated on April 1, the doctors advised the jail officials that Parashuram needed some specialised treatment. On April 6, he was shifted to the Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru, where a mobile phone was removed from Parashuram's stomach on April 25.

A case has been filed against Parashuram with the Tunganagar police in Shivamogga under Section 42 of The Karnataka Prisons (Amendment) Act - 2022 for possessing a mobile phone while in prison.

24 KILLED IN CHINA ROAD COLLAPSE

The cave-in occurred around 2am in Dabu County of Guangdong's northern Meizhou city. Nearly 18 metres of the mountainous highway crumbled into the forested slope below, trapping 20 vehicles and 54 passengers.

SEAL SYMBOL-LOADING UNITS AS PER APEX COURT ORDER: EC

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday asked all state chief electoral officers (CEOs) to seal and securely store the symbol loading units (SLUs), to be used in the remaining five phases of the Lok Sabha elections, till 45 days post the declaration of results.

The SLUs are devices used to load candidates' party symbols to the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

The Supreme Court had in its verdict on electronic voting machines (EVMs) and VVPATs last week, directed the ECI to seal and secure the SLUs for 45 days after the declaration of results. At present, only the EVMs and VVPATs are sealed and stored to allow for examination of the machines if candidates file election petitions.

But from now on, in compliance with the court's order, SLUs will also be examined, if there is an election petition.

As per sources, the new requirement could lead to a shortage of up to 3,000 SLUs for the last two phases.

Sources said to meet the shortfall, the Election Commission has asked the Bharat Electronics and the Electronics Corporation of India to manufacture more SLUs.

EXPRESS READ

Salman house firing: Accused kills self

Mumbai: A 32-year-old man, who was arrested in connection with firing incident outside actor Salman Khan's residence, allegedly hanged himself in the police lockup on Wednesday. The deceased, Anuj Thapan, was accused of supplying weapons to the shooters who opened fire outside Khan's residence in Bandra on April 14 | P9

Plea in SC seeks study of AstraZeneca vax

New Delhi: A plea has been filed by lawyer Vishal Tiwari in the Supreme Court seeking examination of AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine, its side effects and risk factors by constituting a team of expert doctors from AIIMS. The panel should be headed by its director and supervised by a retired Justice of Supreme Court, the plea has sought | P9

ECI bars KCR from campaigning for 48 hours

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Wednesday reprimanded Bharat Rashtra Samithi president K Chandrashekar Rao and barred him from campaigning for 48 hours for his "objectionable" remarks against the Congress. The EC said his remarks at a press conference on April 5 violated the model code of conduct | P5

'Old tiger' roars as Congress seeks to remove the scent of Ajmal in Dhubri

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR
@ Guwahati

SHOWTIME FOR GLADIATORS

IT will be a battle for survival for Assam's most visible Muslim face nationally, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal, when Dhubri goes to parliamentary elections on May 7.

The 68-year-old, who is the three-time sitting MP and chief of All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), is facing a challenge from Rakibul Hussain, a former Congress minister. Zabed Islam of the Asom Gana Parishad is the NDA's consensus candidate.

Dhubri is considered the heartland of Bengali-speaking migrant Muslims. It shares a border with Bangladesh. The outcome of the polls will decide not only the future of Ajmal but also his party.

Over the past few years, a section of AIUDF supporters migrated to other parties, disillusioned that he is allegedly running it as a business enterprise. Ajmal is a perfume baron with business interests in India and some Gulf countries.

The AIUDF also contested Nagaon and Karimganj, both Muslim-majority seats which went to polls on April 26. Critics say the party set up candidates in these seats primarily to aid the ruling BJP. The BJP and the Congress were the two main players in Nagaon and Karimganj.

The Congress is trying to send across a message that Ajmal is an "old tiger" and that the AIUDF is the "B Team" of the BJP. It is telling voters that they have to stop Ajmal first if they want to evict the BJP from power in the state.

ILLUSTRATION: MANOJ PARKHAR

But Ajmal has many advantages. He is rich and known widely as a philanthropist. A virtual messiah of the migrant Muslims, he has been at the forefront every time the community faced any hardships, including during the time when the 1951 National Register of Citizens or NRC was updated in the state.

He had comfortably won the past three elections in the absence of strong opponents. But Hussain is expected to give the AIUDF chief a run for his money this time around.

For Hussain, who holds sway in parts of central Assam, it is his maiden parliamentary election. Since decades, the Congress had been influential in Dhubri and the adjoining Goalpara and Barpeta districts. Then, it slowly lost the space to the AIUDF. If Hussain wins, it could well be the first step for the Congress towards regaining the lost ground.

"Badruddin Ajmal is an old tiger. He woos people through magical healing but it will not keep him in a good stead this election," Hussain claimed.

But Ajmal dismissed the old tiger barb by saying that a tiger is a tiger, whether young or old. "I am young enough to marry again," he said. He predicted that Hussain's defeat is "100% certain". "Nobody can defeat Ajmal in Dhubri. I will win by 5 to 6 lakh votes," he said confidently.